

THE LIEUTENANT'S FATE.

"The third time I laid out the ear's," said the lieutenant, "exactly the same thing happened again; the queen of hearts at the top, meaning love; the king of clubs to the right of her, showing heroic character, and the seven of spades in the last three, showing that the sign was to be fulfilled immediately. I had always hoped that I shouldn't marry a heroine. I can't stand your masculine women." He sighed with Slavonic resignation, and added, "Pozdravim vas," which is Russian for Kismet.

I pitied him from the bottom of my heart, and was glad that the cards had no such power over destiny in England as they have in Russia.

We were marching along the white road under Klovodsk down into the green valley of the Terek. I with my wanderer's wardrobe and sketching pack slung over my shoulders. The six soldiers of the lieutenant's detachment tramped behind us, softly singing, the big corporal was taking his turn as soloist, the five privates joining in with a monotonous "Ay lui, lui!" at the end of each line. The shadows of the hills were creeping slowly up to the white top of Mount Elbruz, which faced us imperturbably over velvet forests from the distance.

The lieutenant's orders were to reach Colonel Orsha's house, on the lower slopes of Okova, by nightfall, and hold it against the rebellious Chechens; and I, the peaceful landscape painter, had been swept away protesting in the current of his march, sketching umbrella and all, from my roadside attitude of artistic unconcern with the quarrels of government and subjects.

The trouble between the tribesmen and the Russians had arisen from the inveterate incompatibility of their ideas as to the right method of acquiring property in horses. Arak, son of the powerful chieftain Peraz, was to be married to Blea of Sizi-aul; and by the way of kolyin, or dowry, the bridegroom was to present Blea's father with twenty mountain horses. Peraz had no horses to spare. What Chechen has? They must be got. But in the matter of horseflesh a Chechenian aristocrat cannot stoop to the sordid methods of purchase; nor would the wife who could say of him: "He bought a horse." Therefore, father and son raided the war office pastures. A hired watchman betrayed them; orders were issued for their arrest, and six villages went on the warpath for the honor of the tribal custom. It was plain that the tribesmen would try to hold the Okova range, as they had done in '93; the business of the lieutenant's regiment was to anticipate them; and Colonel Orsha's house was one of the first positions to be occupied, for it commanded access to the hills from the Terek's side.

The lieutenant and I stopped at the divide and waited for the soldiers to come up.

"Which is the way, Pavel?" asked my companion of the big corporal.

"Up here," replied the giant, pointing to a narrow path which wound its way up among the fir trees to our right.

"Lead the way," said the lieutenant, and the corporal joined us in the front.

He willingly imparted his large knowledge of the people and places about us. He told us of the exploits of Colonel Orsha against the hillmen in the days before he lost his right leg in an affair of the Gruzians.

"The apple lies near the apple tree, as the saying is, masters: 'ke father, like daughter.' Varvara Petrovna's a fine lass, tall and strong, and as bold as a lion. When the Gruzians broke into the empty barracks that day, and the tablemen fled to their stalls, she faced the rebels like a man and rated them for their cowardice, till they slunk away from before her. A fine lass! But you'll judge for yourselves this evening when you see her. A heroine she is! Every one says so; a true heroine."

The lieutenant and I eyed each other with a "wild surmise." Were the cards true prophets? Half an hour's climbing brought us to Colonel Orsha's house, a low white building on a rocky promontory. Passing the wall which cut off the promontory from the hillside, we stepped on to a fresh green lawn running up to the house. From the rocks to the right bubbled a spring, whose waters ran in a little stream across the lawn and flashed down the sheer hillside to the left. Beyond the stream stood a girl—a little, slender figure, clad in pink and topped by a broad straw hat. She was feeding a flock of white, Caucasian pigeons; some were picking the bread crumbs from the grass at her feet, others were poised in the air waiting for a morsel to be thrown them, and one was seated on her arm helping himself from the plate which she held in her hand. Her back was turned to us, and she did not hear

our approach, but as we stepped on to the planks which bridged the stream, the pigeons flew up into the cedars, and she turned toward us a bright, oval face, with loose brown hair shading the soft eyes. Her lips quivered in surprise at the sudden apparition of the armed band.

"Forgive our intrusion, mademoiselle," said the lieutenant, saluting her. "Have I the honor of addressing Miss Orsha?"

"No, that is my cousin; but what are the soldiers come for?"

"To defend your house, mademoiselle. I regret to say the hillmen are in revolt. And permit me to suggest that, under the circumstances it will be better for you to retire within doors."

There was no need for the recommendation. Before the lieutenant's sentence was ended the little pink figure was in full flight for the house. Another figure appeared in the open doorway as the fugitive disappeared, a tall, handsome young woman, with a high aquiline nose and a commanding presence, who came down the steps to meet us. She listened without any appearance of surprise, while the lieutenant stated his mission.

"Pray, send your men to the kitchen," she said, "and follow me to the drawing room. My father will be glad of the opportunity of putting his house and goods at the service of his country."

The evening passed without alarm. The doors were barricaded, the windows loopholed with mattresses and bags of sand, and sentinels were posted on the hillside and a watchman on the roof. At supper the colonel regaled us with stories of his daughter and his family. The colonel was descended in a direct line from Boyarin Orsha of Ivan the Terrible's time, and all his forbears had been mighty men of battle. Varvara Petrovna's great-grandmother was the famous Princess Ochotenski, who had seen her two sons slaughtered before her eyes at Smolensk rather than yield to Napoleon's soldiers the keys of the magazine, which her husband, the commandant, had left in her charge.

When the ladies left us I ventured to question our host as to the young lady we had found in our garden. Sonia Semyonovna, or Sonia, as she was called in the family circle, was a niece of the colonel, daughter of a younger brother, who had disgraced himself by running away with a little Russian actress in the seventies, and had redeemed his disgrace and achieved his wife's misfortunes by getting shot on the heights of the Shipka two years later. The poor widow had returned to the stage and struggled gallantly on for fifteen years, then died, leaving no fortune but a tender recollection behind her. Colonel Orsha had sought out his brother's child and made her welcome to his mountain home. There was a large admixture of contemptuous pity in his tenderness for her; she had none of the stern virtues of Varvara Petrovna. "She is not an Orsha," said the colonel. She seemed in the household like a tender larch budding among the pine trees.

When we passed into the drawing room after supper, the lieutenant went to Varvara Petrovna like a lamb to the slaughter; roko ne minovat. As an artist without a destiny I was able to devote myself to the less heroic charms of Sonia Semyonovna. She had a soft and pretty voice, and at the colonel's request she sang us two or three little Russian songs, sad little dunks of her native Ukraine, accompanying herself on a zither. She ended the evening in disgrace. Fascinated by the sound of the music, a mouse crept out from a corner toward the musician. Sonia was the first to perceive it; dropping her zither on the floor, she leaped upon a chair, holding up her skirts and uttering a series of little screams as high pitched almost as the mouse's own squeak. She was not an Orsha. Varvara Petrovna's cat rose at the sound, and the mouse fled for refuge to the window curtains.

"Silly Sonia," said the stately Varvara, rising and going to the window; "it's only a mouse. Here, Misha!" She shook the curtains; the mouse fell to the floor; and the cat pounced upon it. With the utmost unreason Sonia burst into a flood of tears.

"Cruel, cruel Misha!" she cried.

"Hush, Sonia," said her uncle; "don't disgrace yourself before our guests."

Sonia ran out of the room like a petulant child, and was no more seen that night.

We were up betimes in the morning. Long-robed hillmen had been sighted at dawn in the pass; we might expect an attack before many hours had elapsed. Going to the drawing room at about 9 o'clock I found Varvara Petrovna and the servants kneeling before the ikons; Varvara Petrovna was reading Slavonic prayers out of a large leather book, while the servants crossed themselves vigorously at every verse, and answered Hosposi pomilui—Lord have mercy on us! Sonia was nowhere to be seen.

She was discovered later in the great servants' hall, amusing herself with the soldiers. When the lieutenant and I entered the apartment, she was performing the national shawl dance with the big corporal, while the rest stood by as chorus, singing, "Vo sadi li v ogorode," and clapping their hands in measured time. She was gliding coquettishly away on her heels and too with the shawl raised above her head, while the corporal stamped rhythmically after her in the role of the "gallant lover." At the end of the dance the singers broke into rapturous applause, "Ay do Sofia Semyonovna!" they cried; "molodetz!"

The crash of a rifle butt on the stone floor of the vestibule broke up our musical party; one of the sentinels had come in with the news that the Chechenians were ascending the hillside. Varvara Petrovna summoned the whole company into the drawing room. We stood in a circle about the room and sang the national anthem, "Bozhe Tsarya chram," Varvara Petrovna

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leading the music in a clear ringing voice.

Our hymn was hardly ended when the crash of a bullet in the top of the French glass over the piano, followed by the crack of a rifle outside, warned us that the attack had begun. So, a turned pale and uttered just such another little scream as she had uttered the evening before at the sight of the mouse; then she looked round from face to face, with tears in her eyes and a little frightened smile playing about her lips. Varvara Petrovna took her by the hand and led her from the room; women were not wanted in the apartments facing the enemy.

The house stood, as I have said, on a promontory jutting from the hillside; on two sides the rock continued the lines of the wall precipitously downward; on the third there was no more than a terrace between the house and cliff; attack and defense were concentrated on the side facing down the garden. The enemy took up their place behind the low wall which divided the garden from the hillside, and the fighting revolved itself into a dogged exchange of bullets between sheltered men. Meanwhile the spring bubbled and ran peacefully across the middle distance with cheerful unconcern.

The enemy had made their attack inopportunely; just at the hour when we had hoped to be sitting down to a comfortable dinner. As a man I regretted the wrong to my appetite; as an artist I could do no less than let off an ineffective gun through a loophole to add to the picturesqueness of our defense. Max and artist rejoiced together when Sonia and Varvara Petrovna ran into the room with dishes of smoking cutlets in their hands, and stole around the shelter of the walls to distribute the delicacies among the warriors at the windows. For some reason or other Sonia had arrayed herself in a large white apron and fixed a cook's cap on her head; in this setting her little slender figure and flushed face made the most bewitching picture in the world, as she held her plate daintily out toward me. There was still one outlet left; she put out her hand to lay the plate in the bottom of the loophole, between the sandbags, when an envious bullet howled through the opening, grazing the skin from her white flesh. It was a tiny wound—our first casualty. Sonia drew her hand quickly away, sank to the floor, and cried helplessly between the pain and terror. She refused to be comforted, and was led away sobbing bitterly by the imperturbable Varvara Petrovna.

The fortifications of our loopholes were made of inflammable stuff, and in spite of all carelessness we were in perpetual danger of setting our defenses on fire. To prevent disaster from this cause the lieutenant had had all the water in the house brought into the front rooms. The event proved the wisdom of his precautions; a boiler in one

of the windows caught and burst at once into a mass of flame. Our united efforts extinguished the main conflagration; but meanwhile the outer wood-work had taken fire, and the roof was in danger; without a moment's hesitation the big corporal leaped upon the window sill with a bucket of water and saved further peril with a douche. Before he had time to step back into the room a bullet from a Chechen gun struck him in the chest. With a loud

cry he flung up his arms and fell crashing to the floor. The noise of his fall brought the women to the door. Varvara Petrovna stepped stately into the room, and Sonia appeared behind her with a bandaged hand and tear-stained face.

"Through the lungs!" ejaculated the lieutenant, as the corporal coughed heavily and the blood flowed from his lips.

"It's all over with him!" murmured a soldier, wagging his head as one who knew. "God rest his soul!"

"Ivan, take his place," said the lieutenant. "Ephim must have his window to himself."

"Let Ivan stay where he is," said Varvara Petrovna, coming quietly forward and loosening the dying man's grip on his rifle. "I will take the corporal's place."

She walked to the window, opening the breech with the air of an expert to see if the magazine was full. The dying corporal lay groaning on the floor, but we could not stop to attend to him. Sonia knelt down, took his head in her lap and soothed him as one might soothe a sick child; her tears rained on his face as she kissed him and caressed him and murmured words of comfort.

"Water, water!" groaned the corporal.

"Akulina, Masha!" cried Sonia to the servants beyond the doorway; "bring water quickly!"

"There is none, Baryshnia," answered the frightened Masha; "the corporal threw the last drop out of his window."

Sonia slipped a cushion under the wounded man's head, and went to seek in the empty cans. With all her zeal she could collect no more than a thimbleful, which she administered to her patient.

Varvara Petrovna stood at her post in the window, tall and terrible, leveling her gun and firing as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

"Ay da Varvara Petrovna," said the soldiers approvingly; "molodetz; she's a heroine!"

The dying man soon renewed his piteous cries for water.

"Varvara, uncle, lieutenant, for heaven's sake get some water!" cried Sonia, going frantically from one to another.

"Hush," said Varvara without turning round. "You'll die of an aim."

"There is no water but in the spring," said the colonel.

Sonia disappeared from the room. A minute later we were stupefied with horror. A little slender figure in pink darted out upon the lawn from behind the corner of the house and sped toward the spring; it was Sonia with a bucket in her hand, running as fast as her legs could carry her. A bullet from the enemy plowed up the grass at her feet, but she ran on unheeding. We held our breath and waited.

The Chechenians had ceased firing. A tall form arose and stood upon the garden wall—a handsome young hillman, dressed in a foz-shaped lambskin cap and a long Chechenian robe, with a belt full of silver-hilted knives.

"It is Arak himself, the son of Peraz," said the lieutenant.

Varvara Petrovna slowly raised her gun and covered him.

"Down with your gun, Varvara," cried the colonel, angrily; "the Chechenians have stopped firing." She lowered her weapon.

The young chief jumped down and walked toward Sonia, saluting gracefully. They exchanged a few words; Arak took the bucket from her and filled it at the spring. As she put out her hand to receive it from him he perceived the bandage on her finger. He paused and questioned her; question and answer were lost to us. Instead of handing her the bucket, he advanced side by side with her up to the house. She took the water from him and ran round to the door by which she had made her exit. Arak came close under the windows and asked who was in command; the lieutenant stood forward in the open doorway.

"I congratulate you, sir, upon the valor of the women of your garrison," said Arak, with a polite little smile; "but Chechens do not fight with women. We are dismayed by the courage and devotion of this lady; the house which she shelters her is sacred, and we have no more heart for the attack. There are plenty of foes for us beyond the pass; we go to meet them. Farewell!"

He bowed and returned to his men. In a few minutes there were no Chechens to be seen on the hillside.

Some hours later a detachment of the lieutenant's regiment brought us news of an engagement in the valley. Arak and his father had both been wounded and taken prisoners; the disposition of the hillmen was so complete that the uprising was practically at an end.

Sonia attended the corporal till the end, which was not long in coming. As she rose from her place beside the couch where he lay, her face was so pale, her hands were so cold, and she fell fainting on the floor; the excitement of action ended, she had nothing to sustain her. She was put to bed in a state of high fever. After a thanksgiving service, which Varvara Petrovna held in the drawing room, the lieutenant and I left the house, pursued by the hospitable injunctions of the colonel to be his guests as soon as our fortunes should bring us again to the neighborhood of the Okova.

I met the lieutenant a year later at a dance at Government House, "This," we said of the former day we had spent in the colonel's house.

"I shall always be grateful for that adventure," I said, "it supplied me with a subject for a picture."

"I did more for me," said the lieutenant, smiling. "I spent a month there in the autumn, and found a wife."

"Then the cards—"

"Were true prophets!"

"I congratulate you, my dear fellow; Varvara Petrovna seemed to me a woman whom any man might be proud to—"

"Then go in and win her—she is still free. There comes my wife," Sonia, you haven't forgotten our old comrade in arms?"—Cornhill Magazine.

Patents Issued.

Special Dispatch to the Intelligencer.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 14.—Patents have been issued to West Virginia inventors as follows: John B. Daniels, assignor of one-half to J. W. Ashbaugh, Brownstown, Ratchew-wrench; John W. McCoy, Slick's Grove, saddle; Horace G. Virgin, Penrith, clay-screening apparatus, and Arthur Kitson, Philadelphia, Pa., assignor to Kitson Hydrocarbon Heating and Incandescent Lighting Company, of Philadelphia, Pa., and Charles Town, W. Va., (two patents), vaporizing apparatus and vapor-burning apparatus.

Pensions Granted.

Special Dispatch to the Intelligencer.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 14.—Pensions have been granted to West Virginia applicants as follows:

Increase—John Davis, Creston, to \$12; Wilford Watkins, Monongah, to \$8; Augustus Riggs, Hartford, to \$17; and James Belleville, Gebron, to \$3.

Widows—Emily Morris, Flat Rock, \$8; Alice L. Pepper, Beattyville, \$3.

Foundry Burns.

CINCINNATI, Ohio, Dec. 13.—The building, foundry and machinery of the Lane & Bailey works, at John and Water streets, were burned to-night, the total value being from \$200,000 to \$250,000. They were large manufacturers of saw mills, traction engines and many other articles, and about 200 men are thrown out of work. Captain Packard, of the fire department, was seriously injured while working at the fire.

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